offensive, and we could not succeed unless a substantial part of the German reserves were drawn off. Finally, I reminded the War Cabinet that we had no reserve of man-power sufficient to sustain a combat with the bulk of the German reserves, until the United States of America could bring their strength to bear. I also reminded the War Cabinet that, to maintain our shipping at the barest minimum required to sustain the War, we required to realise a building programme of 3,000,000 gross tons, and we could not afford that men should be recruited from this or from the connected trades. Shipping was at present our weakest flank, and we could not afford to take men from shipbuilding. On the contrary, I had almost come to the conclusion, as the result of my enquiries during the past week, that we should be obliged to withdraw men from the Army for this purpose.

Our failing man-power

In stating the case as above, against the continuation of our offensive in the West, I made it clear that I was not myself committed to the arguments that I had expressed, but I considered that they required earnest consideration. This statement represented the view I then took of the military position and possibilities for 1917. I had, however, no support for this attitude and policy amongst my colleagues. In the course of the discussion that followed it was evident that the Cabinet as a whole took a different view from the one I stated.

It was pointed out that, if the Allies contented themselves with a defensive policy in the West, *My colleagues* or with the policy of small offensives generally attributed to General Petain, which the Chief of the General Staff and General Smuts characterised as equivalent to a defensive